

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 3312

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, HU

SUBJ: HUNGARIAN FONMIN PUJA - THE MAN

REF: (A) BUDAPEST 3300, (B) STATE 231004

1. FOREIGN MINISTER FRIGYES PUJA WAS BORN 55 YEARS AGO OF FARMER PARENTS IN BATTONYA, A TOWN NEAR ROMANIAN FORNTIER. HE IS PROBABLY OF ROMANIAN DESCENT. NOTHING IS KNOWN OF HIS EARLY SCHOOLING. ORIGINALLY A TYPOGRAPHER, HE JOINED HSWP IN 1944, SUBSEQUENTLY WORKING IN A VARIETY OF LOW LEVEL PARTY POSITIONS. HE ENTERED FOREIGN MINISTER IN 1953 AFTER TWO YEARS AT CENTRAL PARTY SCHOOL. PUJA'S FIRST FOREIGN ASSIGNMENT WAS MINISTER TO SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES. HE RETURNED TO BUDAPEST IN 1955 AND IN MAY OF THAT YEAR WAS NOMINATED MINISTER TO AUSTRIA.

2. DURING 1956 REVOLT PUJA ORGANIZED AN ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE IN HIS EMBASSY IN VIENNA AND WAS RELIEVED OF HIS POST BY IMRE NAGY, HEAD OF REVOLUTIONARY HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT. HE FLED TO BRATISLAVA TO AWAIT OUTCOME OF REVOLT AND, AFTER FORMATION OF KADAR GOVERNMENT IN NOVEMBER 1956, RETURNED TO VIANNA WHERE HE REMAINED UNTIL 1959.

3. AS DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER (AUGUST 1959), PUJA SUPERVISED RONMIN'S SCANDINAVIAN, EAST EUROPEAN AND BALKAN SECTIONS BUT IN 1963 WAS PLACED IN CHARGE OF WESTERN EUROPEAN, U.S. AND CANADIAN AFFAIRS. HE LEFT FOREIGN MINISTRY IN DECEMBER 1963 TO BECOME CHIEF OF CC'S DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WHICH
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HANDLES CONTACTS BETWEEN HUNGARIAN AND OTHER COMPARTIES AND SUPERVISES FOREIGN MINISTRY. PUJA ALSO SAT ON EXECUTIVE BOARD OF PARTY'S INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL RELATIONS WHICH REVIEWS HUNGARY'S CULTURAL CONTACTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. IN JUNE 1968 HE RETURNED TO FONMIN TO BECOME FIRST DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, A POST HE HELD UNTIL DECEMBER 1973 WHEN HE ASSUMED HIS PRESENT POSITION.

4. PUJA HAS A HIGHLY IDEOLOGICAL APPROXIMATE FOREIGN RELATIONS, FREQUENTLY MAKING USE OF DIALECTICAL APPROACH IN HIS DEALINGS WITH COUNTERPARTS IN WESTERN COUNTRIES. DANISH AND DUTCH FOREIGN MINISTERS HAVE HAD HEATED DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM ON HIS EVALUATION OF NATO COUNTRIES' POLICIES AND BOTH CAME AWAY WITH IMPRESSION THAT THEY HAD BEEN DEALING WITH AN EXTREMELY HARD-LINE, PRO-SOVIET COMMUNIST WITH AN INNATE DISTRUST OF WEST. FRENCH, BRITISH, GREEKS, GERMANS AND ITALIANS REGARD HIM AS A PARROT OF MOSCOW LINE AND HAVE FOUND THAT IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM HE COMES ACROSS HARD AND UNYIELDING. TO US HE DOES NOT APPEAR PARTICULARLY INTELLIGENT OR IMAGINATIVE BUT HE DOES HAVE A LOGICAL MIND AND IS A GOOD ORGANIZER. DURING HIS FIVE-YEAR STINT AS FIRST DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER HE WAS CREDITED WITH PUTTING SOME DISCIPLINE INTO MINISTRY AND BEING MAN BEHIND-THE-SCENES IN SUPPORT OF FOREIGN MINISTER JANOS PETER.

5. WE HAVE HEARD FROM TIME TO TIME FROM USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCES THAT PUJA IS NOT REPEATEDLY A KADAR FAVORITE. HIS RIGID, HARD-LINE ATTITUDE DOES NOT SEEM TO FIT IN WITH KADAR'S MORE PLIANT, PRAGMATIC POLICIES. WHILE OBQIEJA HAS EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN IMPROVEMENT OF HUNGARIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND SPEAKS LOUDLY IN FAVOR OF DETENTE, HIS WRITINGS AND PUBLIC SPEECHES OFTEN BRAND THE U.S. AS MAJOR CAUSE OF WORLD TENSION.

6. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS PUJA CAN RELAX, ENGAGE IN SMALL TALK AND OCCASIONALLY SMILE, ALBEIT GRIMLY. HIS AGITPROP PERSONALITY, HOWEVER, INVARIABLY PREDOMINATES AND HE HAS A TENSE, UNCOMPROMISING, SIMPLISTIC AND CONFIDENTIAL

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GLOOMY VIEW OF THE WORLD, ALL OF WHICH EMERGES IN HIS SPEECHES AND ARTICLES. HIS OUTLOOK IS LIMITED BY HIS APPARENT ACCEPTANCE OF ONE OF THE MORE PRIMITIVE VERSIONS OF SIEGE MARXISM, DESPITE HIS EXPERIENCES IN SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES AND AUSTRIA. EVERYTHING THAT PUJA DOES PUBLICLY IS ALMOST ALWAYS RIGHT DOWN MOSCOW LINE AND PRESUMPTION OF MANY OBSERVERS OF HUNGARIAN SCENE IS THAT HE IS

MOSCOW'S MAN. STRONGLY CONVINCED OF THIS, FOR EXAMPLE, IS PRESENT YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR. THERE MAY BE SOME DISTORTION IN THAT PICTURE IN THIS HIGHLY NATIONALISTIC COUNTRY. WHAT IS REFLECTED IN HIS PUBLIC SPEECHES AND CONDUCT MAY BE NOTHING MORE THAN A MANIFESTATION OF HIS DOUBT, PESSIMISTIC AND BASICALLY UNCOMPROMISING CHARACTER. ONE FORMER AMBASSADOR ONCE WAS HEARD TO SAY THAT AFTER FOUR YEARS HERE HE KNEW ONLY ONE REAL COMMUNIST -- FRIGYES PUJA. THIS STATEMENT, OF COURSE, IS PURE HYPERBOLE BUT IT DOES GIVE A TRUE REFLECTION OF IMPACT HE HAS PERSONALLY ON NON-COMMUNIST WESTERNERS.

7. PUJA IS NOT A SIGNIFICANT FIGURE IN POWER EQUATION IN HUNGARY. HE PLAYS NO ROLE IN FORMULATION OF FOREIGN POLICY BUT MERELY CARRIES OUT, AS FOREIGN MINISTERS IN ALL COMMUNIST COUNTRIES DO, INSTRUCTIONS HANDED DOWN TO THEM BY THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGEMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN THE CC. IN HUNGARY THIS IS ANDRAS GYENES. PUJA IS A BUREAUCRAT. HE IS NOT AN INNOVATOR, A THINKER. HUNGARIANS EVIDENTLY THINK THAT, AS LONG AS IT IS THEIR DECISION TO GO DOWN THE LINE IN UNFLINCHING SUPPORT OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES, FOR PURPOSES OF EFFECT IT IS BETTER TO HAVE A BELIEVER IN CHARGE THAN AN ACTOR. FOR ALL OF HIS THEATRICIAN TALENTS, FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER JANOS PETER WAS NOT REALLY BELIEVABLE IN ARTICULATION AND EXECUTION OF HUNGARIAN FOREIGN POLICY. BUT PUJA IS. IMPORTANCE OF PUJA'S CALL ON SECRETARY LIES IN CONTINUATION OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE AT HIGHEST LEVELS, IN SURGING DRIVE OF GOH FOR RESPECTABILITY, AND IMPACT THOSE TWO FACTORS HAVE IN INCREASING INTEREST OF HSWP POLICY-MAKERS IN EXPANDING RELATIONS WITH U.S.

8. PHYSICALLY, PUJA IS SLIGHTLY ABOVE HEIGHT,
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TENDING TO BE SOMEWHAT ROUNDISH AND HEAVYSET. HE OFTENTIMES IS SEEN WITH A WISP OF UNRULY HAIR OVER ONE EYE AND IN GENERAL HE GIVES IMPRESSION OF ONE NOT TOO INTENT ON HOW HE LOOKS. HE IS MARRIED AND HAS TWO CHILDREN, ONE A DAUGHTER IN HER EARLY THIRTIES WHO HAS PRESENTED HIM WITH A GRANDCHILD. HE SPEAKS GERMAN WELL AND, ALTHOUGH HE APPEARS TO UNDERSTAND ENGLISH, NO ONE HAS EVER HEARD HIM ATTEMPT TO SPEAK IT.
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